Remarks

Claims 40 through 53, having been withdrawn from consideration, have been cancelled and will be resubmitted in a divisional patent application. Claims 1, 2, 4, 9, 12, 14, and 25 through 27 have been amended as proposed to remedy various informalities cited. The remaining claims in the application have been rejected either as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,944,523 to Hardy et al or rendered obvious in view of Hardy et al alone or Hardy et al taken with Alexander et al. Applicant submits that neither of such references discloses nor teaches the claimed invention. Accordingly, reconsideration of the rejection of Applicant's claims respectfully is requested in view of the following comments.

Hardy et al discloses a link for a suspension system of an automobile or light truck which functions to link the upper stabilizer bar of the system to a lower control element thereof. In particular, it illustrates and describes a link consisting of a bolt 112 adapted to be inserted between aligned openings in such a stabilizer bar and lower control element, a washer 130 mounted on the bolt and engaging a nut portion 114 mounted on one end of the bolt, a grommet 134 mounted on the bolt having one end thereof snap-fit onto washer 130 and the other end thereof engaging one side of the lower control element, a grommet 138 mounted on the bolt and engaging a second side of the lower control element, a spool member 122 mounted on the bolt having an annular flange portion 126 snap-fit into an end of grommet 138, a grommet 140 mounted on the bolt and having one end snap-fit onto annular flange 128 of the spool member and the other end thereof engaging the upper stabilizer bar, a grommet 136 mounted on the bolt and having one end engaging a second side of the upper stabilizer bar and a flanged nut 120 threaded onto a threaded end of the bolt, having a flanged portion 132 snap-fit into an end of grommet 136.

Several links of the type disclosed in Hardy et al may be utilized in each automobile and light truck manufactured and sold. Such links are commonly are manufactured by supplier and sold to automotive companies for installation in literally millions of vehicles. Because of the number used, the cost of such links to automotive manufacturers is significant, and because the time and effort of assembly of such links is costly, the number of components making up such links is significant. A further concern is the transportation and handling of the various components of such links.

Considering the aforementioned concerns, the Hardy et al link is unattractive for a number of reasons. Initially, it is to be noted that it utilizes eight separate components. Each of such components must be manufactured by a supplier, packaged by the supplier in an orderly manner for shipment to the automotive manufacturer, and installed by an assembler of the automotive manufacturer. Because of the number of components, the packaging and transportation of the components can provide a problem. Furthermore, because of the number of components, the assembly time and effort is increased.

The link and component grommet recited in Applicant's claims not only are neither disclosed nor taught by Hardy et al but provide a link assembly which is less costly to manufacture, more conveniently assembled for shipment and more easily installed by assemblers in vehicles. Initially, it is submitted that none of the references of record recite a link assembly provided with a bolt having upset portions on which grommets mounted on such bolt are snap-fit onto as recited in claims 1 through 27 and 54. In lieu of a bolt with upset portions on which a pair of grommets may be snap-fit onto, Hardy et al provides a separate component, i.e., a spool, the use of which not only results in increased manufacturing and assembly costs but potential handling problems. None of the references discloses or teaches a link assembly provided with a bolt having a pair of upset portions on which a pair of grommets are snap-fit, and wherein each of the grommets is provided with a washer insert molded therein, as recited in claims 4, 9 and 20 through 27. In this regard, it is to be noted that none of the grommets utilized in the Hardy et al link include both a portion functional to snap-fit onto an upset portion of a bolt and a washer insert molded into the grommet. At most, the grommets of Hardy et al merely provide a grommet adapted to snap-fit on an annular portion of a spool member or a separate washer. None of the references of record discloses or teaches a grommet provided with a portion which snap-fits on an upset portion of a bolt and snap-fit on the annular flange of a nut as recited in claims 11 through 17, or a link assembly provided with a grommet with a portion which snap-fits on the upset portion of a bolt and a washer insert molded in the grommet as recited in claims 4, 9 and 10.

Claims 18 and 19 recite a link assembly in which each of the outer grommets includes a bore for receiving a bolt therethrough, and a wall of the bore is provided with a protrusion engageable with the

bolt extending through the bore, functional to permit the outer grommet to be temporarily held on the end of the bolt for shipping purposes. Clearly, none of the references of record discloses or teaches a grommet provided with any such protuberance which allows the outer grommets to be temporarily mounted on the bolt component for retaining them for transportation purposes. Finally, it is submitted that none of the references either discloses or teaches a grommet provided with a portion for snap-fitting the grommet onto an upset portion of a bolt and a rigid washer insert molded in the grommet, as recited in claims 28 through 39.

It particularly is to be noted that the claimed invention is a vast improvement over the link assembly disclosed in the Hardy et al patent in that it not only involves fewer parts, i.e., five compared to eight, but permits the assembly to be shipped in a more compact condition to avoid a loss or misplacement of components, and facilitates installation. As illustrated and described in the application, the assembly may be assembled and shipped with the inner grommets mounted on the bolt and retained thereon by being snap-fit onto the upset portions of the bolt, and the outer grommets may be temporarily mounted on the free ends of the bolts and retained thereon by means of the protrusions provided in the bores thereof which would engage the bolt. With the assembly thus configured and shipped to the automotive company, an assembler need only remove the outer grommets from the bolt, insert the ends of the bolt with the inner grommets mounted thereon in the aligned openings of the upper stabilizer bar and lower control element, and then thread the outer grommets on the threaded ends of the bolt to firmly install the assembly.

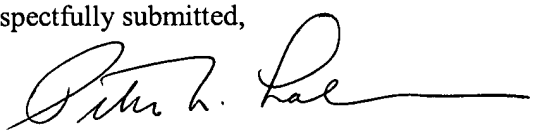
The purported pertinency of the Alexander et al Patent is not understood. Such reference appears to disclose merely an assembly for clamping to planar pieces together, consisting of a threaded bolt extending through an opening in the pieces to be clamped together, a pair of frustoconically configured members having openings therein mounted on the bolt on opposite sides of the pieces being clamped together, and a pair of wing nuts threaded on the ends of the threaded bolt and turned to force the frustoconically configured members toward the pieces being clamped together, urging portions thereof

the threaded bolt. It is not seen how such reference either discloses or teaches anything recited in any of Applicant's claims.

In view of the foregoing, it respectfully is requested that the rejection of claims 1 through 39 and 54 be withdrawn and such claims be allowed and that the application be passed to issue.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any underpayment of fees or credit any overpayment of fees in connection with this communication to Deposit Account 19-4375.

Respectfully submitted,



Peter N. Lalos
Registration No. 19,789
STEVENS, DAVIS, MILLER & MOSHER, LLP
1615 L Street, N.W., Suite 850
Washington, D.C. 20036-5622

May 10, 2006
PNL:cb
202/785-0100